

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the causing of step (b) is continued until a predetermined temperature is reached.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the predetermined temperature is sustained for a predetermined period of time, prior to step (c).
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the causing of step (b) occurs until any discomfort in the suspected area decreases to a predetermined level.
5. (Cancelled)
6. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting infection, comprising:  
(a) providing an apparatus for inhibiting infection, the apparatus comprising a heat transfer element, a non-metallic positioning element configured to be grasped by a user, and a thermal energy source comprising a liquid disposed in a sealed cavity;  
([[a]] b) disposing a surface of [[a]] the heat transfer element in close proximity to a suspected area of infection;  
([[b]] c) causing a rapid temperature change in [[a]] the suspected area of infection,  
([[c]] d) discontinuing the causing of the rapid temperature change; and  
([[d]] e) assessing the suspected area for occurrence of infection, wherein the assessing comprises evaluating a subject's level of discomfort, and treatment is terminated if the evaluating indicates a rapid increase in discomfort followed by a gradual decrease in discomfort.
7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising repeating steps (a) – (d) if the assessing in step (d) indicates that infection may still occur.
8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)
10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the surface of the heat transfer element is configured to a shape of a target area.
11. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 26, further comprising a temperature detector.
12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the temperature detector regulates activation of the thermal energy source.
13. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 26, further comprising at least one selected from an input and an output, for communicating data with at least one other device.
14. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 26, further comprising an insulating element.
15. (Cancelled)
16. (Cancelled)
17. (Cancelled)
18. (Cancelled)
19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus once a treatment criteria is met.
20. (Previously Presented) A method for using an apparatus for inhibiting infection, comprising:  
positioning a surface of a heat transfer element in close proximity to a suspected area of infection; and  
activating the apparatus to cause a rapid temperature change in the suspected area of infection, wherein the activating is initiated by a temperature detector.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, wherein the activating occurs for a predetermined period.
22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, wherein the activating is initiated by one or more external devices in communication with the apparatus.
23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus based on reaching a predetermined temperature in a target area.
24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus based once a predetermined temperature of a target area is maintained for a predetermined amount of time.
25. (Cancelled)
26. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for inhibiting infection, comprising:  
a self-contained portable hand-held unit, comprising:
  - (a) a heat transfer element having a surface configured to be positioned in close proximity to a suspected area of infection;
  - (b) a non-metallic positioning element configured to be grasped by a user; and
  - (c) a thermal energy source comprising a ~~chemical compound~~ fluid sealed within a cavity substantially disposed within the non-metallic positioning element and in fluid communication with an inner surface of the heat transfer element, for altering a temperature of the surface of the heat transfer element until a predetermined temperature is reached, wherein the predetermined temperature is a temperature that is lower than an initial temperature of the suspected area of infection.